

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 00221 110933Z

ACTION EA-12

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SUBJECT: NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY POSTPONES CONVENTION, RESOLVES
FURTHER POLITICAL EFFORTS

SUMMARY: THE OPPOSITION NEW DEMONCRATIC PARTY (NDP) LEADER-
SHIP JANUARY 9 DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE PARTY'S NEXT REGULAR
CONVENTION UNTIL AFTER THE ASSEMBLY ELECTION EXPECTED IN
EARLY 1979. THE NDP CENTRAL STANDING COMMITTEE THE FOLLOWING
DAY ELECTED YI CHOL-SUNG'S CHOICE AS CHAIRMAN AND ADOPTED
RESOLUTION WHICH INTER ALIA OPPOSED TROOP WITHDRAWAL, AND
PROMISED CONTINUED EFFORTS FOR REPEAL OF EMERGENCY MEASURES,
RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND AMENDMENT OF LAW TO PERMIT
PARTY PARTICIPATION IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. FACTIONAL
CONFLICT NOT VISIBLY ABATED BY RESOLUTION FORESWEARING PARTY
DISPUTES, AND DECISION ON TRYING TO CONTEST PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION REMAINS TO BE MADE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NDP'S 6-MAN SUPREME COMMITTEE ON JANUARY 9
UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE CONVOCAION OF A REGU-
LAR NATIONAL CONVENTION UNTIL AFETER THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
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PAGE 02 SEOUL 00221 110933Z

ELECTION EXPECTED IN EARLY 1979, DECISION ON CONVENTION WAS
REFERRED TO NDP POLITICAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL FOR REQUIRED
ENDORSEMENT. LATTER COUNCIL DEBATED ISSUE HEATEDLY FOR
SEVERAL HOURS, AND FINALLY REFERRED DECISION BACK TO
SUPREME COMMITTEE, WHICH IT EMPOWERED TO MAKE FINAL
DECISION. WHILE ACTION MAY BE DEFERRED, OBSERVERS EXPECT
THE COMMITTEE TO REITERATE ITS EARLIER DECISION.

2. CONVENTION HAD BEEN SOUGHT BY YI CHOL-SUNG'S CHIEF RIVAL, KIM YONG-SAM, BUT THE PROSPECT WAS DISTURBING TO MANY PARTY LEADERS, BECAUSE IT WOULD REQUIRE THEM TO FACE ANOTHER CAMPAIGN FOR THEIR PARTY POSITIONS, INVOLVING CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE (RUMORS PUT YI'S EXPENDITURES IN 1976 CONVENTION AT 200 MILLION WON), TOGETHER WITH RISK OF LOSING THEIR PRESTIGIOUS POSITIONS. THEY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A PROVISION IN THE PARTY CONSTITUTION WHICH PERMITS POSTPONEMENT OF THE CONVENTION, NORMALLY REQUIRED ONCE EVERY TWO YEARS, UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION.

3. NDP CENTRAL STANDING COMMITTEE HELD ITS FIRST MEETING SINCE THE 1976 PARTY CONVENTION ON JANUARY 10. PRINCIPAL BUSINESS WAS ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN; YI CHOL-SUNG'S NOMINEE PAK YONG-NOK WAS CHOSEN, BY A VOTE OF 158 TO 126, OVER RETIRED LT. GENERAL KIM HYONG-IL, SUPPORTED BY KIM YONG-SAM. OBSERVERS COMMENT THAT MARGIN OF VICTORY REFLECTS SECURE POSITION OF YI IN PARTY, SINCE PAK WAS PERSONALLY A FAR WEAKER CANDIDATE THAN KIM. KIM SUFFERED THE DEFECTION OF SEVERAL OF HIS FORMER ASSOCIATES IN THE ELECTION, WHILE YI'S NOMINEES NOW ARE CHAIRMAN OF BOTH THE STANDING COMMITTEE AND THE PARTY CONVENTION, FURTHER CEMENTING THIS CONTROL OF THE NDP APPARATUS.

4. THE MEETING ALSO ADOPTED A FIVE-POINT RESOLUTION:
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PAGE 03 SEOUL 00221 110933Z

OPPOSING WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS, RENOUNCING INTERNAL PARTY DISPUTES, PROMISING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE LIVING STANDARDS FOR LOW INCOME PEOPLE, PLEDGING TO SEEK RELEASE OF "ARRESTED PERSONS", AND URGING REALIZATION OF THE NDP'S PROPOSAL OF A PARLIAMENTARY BODY FOR DELIBERATION ON THE CONSTITUTION "TO FUNDAMENTALLY SOLVE THE IMPROPERITY AND CONTRADICTION CONTAINED IN THE PRESENT ELECTION SYSTEMS FOR PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL UNIFICATION CONFERENCE WHICH COMPLETELY DENY PARTICIPATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES".

5. DESPITE YI'S VICTORY IN THE RECENT MEETINGS, THE POSSIBILITY STILL EXISTS OF AN EXTRAORDINARY PARTY CONVENTION TO CONSIDER NOMINATING A CANDIDATE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AS ADVOCATED BY KIM YONG-SAM. SUCH A CONVENTION COULD BE CALLED ON THE BASIS OF A PETITION SIGNED BY ONE-THIRD OF THE DELEGATES TO THE LAST CONVENTION, AND THESE SIGNATURES SHOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN FROM DELEGATES WHO ARE ALWAYS INTERESTED IN A TRIP TO SEOUL AND IN BEING COURTED BY CANDIDATES. HOWEVER, THE ACTUAL OUTCOME OF A CONVENTION IS UNCERTAIN AND THE CHANCES FOR THE NDP'S MOUNTING ANY SORT OF A SERIOUS CHALLENGE IN

THE ELECTION ITSELF UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE
NEGLIGIBLE. THEREFORE IT IS HARD TO BE SURE HOW SERIOUSLY
KIM WILL PURSUE THIS GOAL. NONETHELESS, IF HE FELT HE
COULD GAIN THE NOMINATION, IN THE FACE OF YI'S KNOWN
PREFERENCE FOR STAYING OUT OF THE ELECTION ENTIRELY, HE
MIGHT FEEL THE STATUS THUS CONFERRED WOULD BE WORTH THE
EFFORT. KIM WILL CERTAINLY CONTINUE TO EXPLORE THE
OPTIONS WHILE YI IS ABROAD ON HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP TO
THE U.S. AND EUROPE.
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